

IN CRAFT AND ART FROM TRADITIONAL TO CONTEMPORARY AVANOS POTTERY



GELENEKSELDEN ÇAĞDAŞA ZANAAT VE SANATTA AVANOS ÇÖMLEKÇİLİĞİ

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ABSTRACT: Considering the Neolithic Period when art began, pottery and symbolically terracotta art in particular, Anatolia, with its geography extending from Front Asia to Europe, the location which lived these periods earlier than their contemporaries, is an important area of pottery. Pottery, which has been able to continue in many parts of Anatolia without disturbing its archaeological features in terms of production style, is also an important intangible cultural heritage. Having been going on for thousands of years, this craft, unfortunately lost its existence in many centers within the process of extinction. In such a process, one of the pottery centers having the chance to be able to survive in Turkey is Avanos. Avanos, which is the district of Nevşehir province in Central Anatolia, is an important showcase of pottery producing both functional and craft / art terracotta for touristic purposes with the great support provided by its geographical advantages and the efforts of its masters as well as being an important tourism region.

In this article, it is aimed to explain the historical characteristics of Avanos pottery, its contributions to contemporary art in its journey from traditional to contemporary and its economic and cultural achievements, including a critical perspective.

Keywords: Avanos, pottery, cultural heritage, art, craft, tradition.

ÖZ: Çömlekçiliğin ve simgesel olarak pişmiş toprak özelinde sanatın başladığı Neolitik Dönem göz önüne alındığında, bu dönemleri çağdaşlarına göre daha erken yaşayan Asya ve Ön Asya'nın Avrupa'ya uzanan coğrafyasında yer alan Anadolu, çömlekçiliğin önemli bir alanıdır. Anadolu'nun birçok yerinde üretim tarzı açısından arkeolojik özelliklerini bozmadan devam edebilen çömlekçilik, aynı zamanda önemli bir somut olmayan kültürel mirastır. Binlerce yıldır süregelen bu zanaat, yok olma sürecinde birçok merkezde varlığını ne yazık ki yitirmiştir. Böyle bir süreçte Türkiye'de ayakta kalabilme şansına sahip çömlekçilik merkezlerinden biri Avanos'tur. Orta Anadolu'da Nevşehir ilinin ilçesi olan Avanos, coğrafi avantajları ve ustalarının gayretinin yanı sıra önemli bir turizm bölgesi olmasının sağladığı büyük destekle, turistik amaçlı işlevsel ve zanaat/sanat kapsamında pişmiş toprak üreten önemli bir çömlekçilik vitrinidir.

Bu makalede, Avanos çömlekçiliğinin geçmişinden gelen özellikleriyle birlikte, gelenekselliğinden çağdaş uzanan serüveninde çağdaş sanata katkıları, ekonomik ve kültürel kazanımları, eleştirel bakış açısı da dâhil edilerek anlatılmak istenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Avanos, çömlekçilik, kültürel miras, sanat, zanaat, gelenek.

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Introduction

It is undoubtedly exciting that thousands of years of terracotta production from the Neolithic Period to the present day having been maintained in the rural settlements of Anatolia, especially in the rural areas close to the archaeological sites, without much change in the production style. For example, wheel pottery is an ongoing archaeological find in Anatolia, almost without any deterioration in style. Pottery, due to the fact that terracotta is an indestructible material, is also an important cultural value in terms of carrying data in many disciplines such as archaeological, anthropological, ethnographic, etc.

The cultural scope of pottery undoubtedly also includes art. The forms and decorations of Neolithic Period pottery with ceramics are regarded as the beginning of symbolic art. Çatalhöyük, one of the important centers of the Neolithic and Chalcolithic Period in Anatolia, gives interesting examples of symbolic art. These types of works were created not with pure abstractions, but with spiritual and mythological approaches. Especially the works done in Çatalhöyük and Hacılar are very successful and they are the first art creations of humanity on ceramics (Akurgal, 1998: 8). Geographically close to important archaeological settlements such as Çatalhöyük, Avanos is an important center that keeps this Anatolian culture alive today.

The difference of Avanos pottery from other pottery centers is that it provides important input to the local economy from this occupation as well as maintaining this tradition. The most important factor in providing economic input is that in addition to the traditional pottery made by master hands in the region, it is a tourism region that is known as "Cappadocia", which is based on the handicraft and archaeological richness of the region and has an intense domestic and foreign tourist activity. The most important city, identified with the name of Cappadocia in the region covering the provinces Nevşehir, Aksaray, Niğde, Kırşehir and Kayseri, is the province Nevşehir where Avanos district is also included. Having natural and historical beauties such as interesting underground settlements, caves and fairy chimneys of Ürgüp and Göreme districts, which are neighboring Nevşehir districts to Avanos, also increases the attraction of tourism.

The advantage of Avanos within the scope of pottery is that together with the natural conditions, it has soil from which the fertile ceramic clays, fed by the Kızılırmak River passing through the district, can be obtained. Despite the other pottery centers of Anatolia, Avanos has become the best pottery center with its supporting elements.

This uninterrupted craft kept alive in Avanos experienced intellectual problems based on economy while being transformed into modern ceramic art; however, we cannot ignore the Avanos pottery that modern ceramic artists interpret with contemporary depictions and stylization.

Avanos History and Geography

Avanos is a district of Nevşehir province, which is the center of the Cappadocia Region. Nevşehir is located in the Central Kızılırmak Section of the Central Anatolia Region. The administrative boundary of the city with neighboring settlements is roughly surrounded by the administrative area of Çat, Nar and Sulusaray in the north, Göreme and Uçhisar in the east, Göre and Boğazköy in the south, and Balcın and Alacaşar municipalities in the west (Şikoğlu, 2017: 346). Its geological structure is very suitable for clay formation, the raw material of pottery. There is a red clay gallery belonging to the Neogene period in the northwest, and formations containing a large amount of volcanic tuff of the Neogene time in the northeast (Tatlılioğlu, 2016:72).



Map 1. Nevşehir, Avanos, Cappadocia Region Map

Periodic findings show that life in Cappadocia, where Avanos is located, goes back to the pre-settled period, to the Paleolithic Period. Neolithic Period findings are not at a sufficient level. Nevertheless, it is not possible that the Neolithic Period, which was intense in the surrounding regions, was not experienced in Cappadocia. At the end of the Neolithic Period, it is seen that some of the permanent settlements in Cappadocia were abandoned and new villages were established except for the old settlements (Sagona ve Zimansky, 2009:116).



Picture 1. Avanos General View

The fertile lands of the Kızılırmak River and its basin passing through the district have witnessed the settlement of many civilizations throughout history. The periods when we can look at the history of Avanos more clearly are the periods of civilizations that have lived since the Late Bronze Age (1650-1200 BC).



Picture 2. View from Cappadocia

Avanos, a part of Cappadocia bearing the traces of Hittite, Phrygian, Persian, Assyrian, Roman, Byzantine, Seljuk and Ottoman in the past, has an important place in the region with its history dating back at least 4000 years. According to the findings obtained from the excavations carried out by Italians in Topaklı Höyük in 1967; It is said that the history of Avanos goes back to Etiler(Hittite). Hittites, Medes, Phrygians, Assyrians, Persians, Celts, Cappadocia Kingdom, Byzantines, Seljuks and Ottomans took part in different stages of Avanos history for various periods. According to many historians, the name of Avanos was "Zuwinasa" in the Hittite period, "Nenansa" in the Assyrian period, "Venessa" in the Byzantine period, "Evenüz" in the Seljuk period. While it was pronounced as "Uvenez, Evenez, Avanoz" in the Ottoman period, it turned into "Avanos" in time. Avanos, in the separation of the word "Evenuz", which originated from the name Avanos during the Seljuk period; "Evani" means "pots, dishes, kitchen utensils", and "Evenuz" means that it is a place that makes pottery; therefore, "Evani-öz, Even-öz" connotes " the town that makes pots and makes pottery" (URL1).

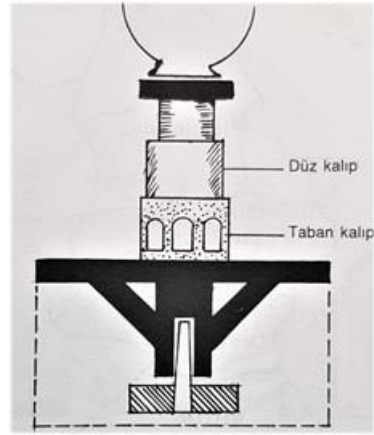
Traditional Avanos Pottery

It is known that pottery in Avanos has continued uninterruptedly since the Hittites in line with the researches carried out, and reached today by passing through various stages. Avanos pottery has different characteristics that distinguish it from other traditional Anatolian pottery. Although there were about 70 ateliers in the 70s and 80s, the times when important qualities were sought and during which not every potter was considered a master, the number of masters was around 30 (Ünal, 1989: 9).

In the 2000s, the increase in the number of masters in Avanos workshops is remarkable. In the 2000s, the number of masters increased substantially and reached 300. The number of workshops in the original stone structures is 75. (Güner, 2001: 43). This increase illustrates that cultural, economic and traditional attraction is in a dynamic process in Avanos.

The soil used in Avanos pottery is taken from the hills varying between 500 m and 6 km far from the district around Avanos. Another part of the soil is obtained from the alluviums left by Kızılırmak in its old bed. The ateliers are similar except for very few differences. There are 1-4 potter wheel benches in each ateliers ("işlik") (Ünal, 1990: 67).

The ateliers are generally planned in accordance with pottery production. The atelier includes a mud pool, a mud kneading table and potter wheel (s). The drying room is in a separate room. This drying room is locally called "yanalak". There are also natural underground ateliers in Avanos and they are also interesting.



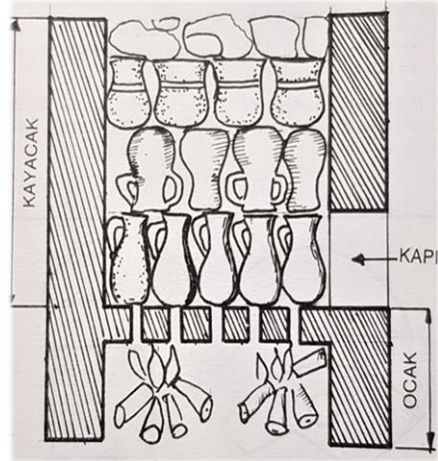
Picture 3. Avanos Pottery Wheel, Master Galip Drawing 1. Avanos Pottery Wheel,

Avanos potter's wheel has a feature that is not found in any potter center. The potter wheels used in Anatolia, cycled by feet, are generally long spindle wheels located on the "right" or "left" of the potter master and whose ergonomic height is determined by a wooden bench. In Avanos, the wheel has a short shaft and a ball (bearing) and is located "between" the two legs of the potter master. The height of the wheel is provided in a cylindrical structure consisting of two or three parts, in a way that it is aligned with the master with terracotta material. The top tray on which the clay pellets will be placed on the cylindrical terracotta elevations on the potter's wheel, called "çıkırık" with its local name, can be in dimensions that can be adjusted in width and length according to the size of the container to be made.

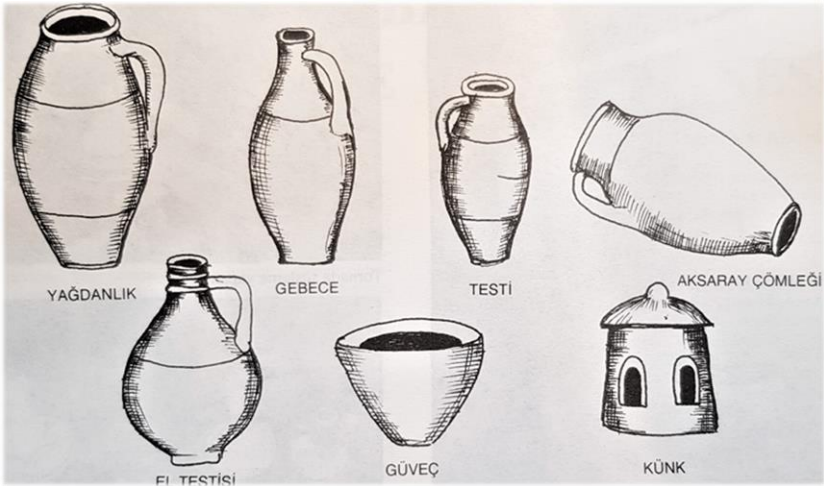
Kiln structures also show local originality. Local kilns are different from other egg type Anatolian pottery kilns, called "black kilns", which are cylindrical type ones built with earth-plastered stones, with the furnace part separated at the bottom. Kilns are sized according to the number of pots to be cooked (500, 900 and 1000). Its firing temperature is around 700 °C (Ünal, 1990: 69).



Picture 4. Black Kiln



Drawing 2. Black Kiln



Drawing 3. Traditional Avanos Pottery

Traditional vessel forms are fully functional and take local names. Local names of some container forms are as follows; a. Gebece: To store grape stum, b. Cube: In winemaking, water storage and pickle making (pitchy inside walls), c. Casserole: In cooking d. Hand jugs: For carrying liquid (3-3.5 Lt), e. Medium Glass: Water containers with handles or pitchers (1-1,5 Lt), f.

Aksaray Pottery: It took this name because it is in high demand in Aksaray district of Niğde province (Ünal, 1990:68).

The most important feature of Avanos pottery masters is that they know and practice wheel pottery very well. Pottery produced in Avanos during the period when only traditional production was carried out was made and sold with a commercial understanding that would meet the pottery needs of the district center and neighboring districts. The revenue from the sale of pottery made in this way was the source of income for the potters.

Today's Avanos Pottery

Nowadays, in the process of extinction of traditional pottery in many centers in Anatolia without cultural protection, Avanos pottery, despite the effort to be maintained, albeit by resisting local needs for functional purposes only, continues its production within the general principles of ceramic production, but with differences in line with the conditions of the age

In these ateliers ("işlik"), which present the reality of being the handicraft center of Cappadocia to Avanos, 250 people, 150 of which are pottery masters, work, and when their families are taken into account, today, approximately 1500 people actually make a living from this sector. There are still around 50 ateliers ("işlik") in Avanos, most of which work with traditional methods. The ateliers, most of which consist of natural rock carved caves, are mostly clustered in the center of Avanos and are an important attraction center for visitors (URL2). The remarkable issue here is that although the number of pottery ateliers and masters was low in the 70's and before, this number is much higher today. The increase in the number of ateliers and employees is an indication that the ongoing pottery in the region has increased economic returns, especially with tourism, and thus the pottery industry has become a center of attraction.

Sectoral increase in the number of masters and employees in Avanos has brought along production modernization with exceptions. The traditional potter's wheel has been replaced by modern electric lathes. Likewise, the kilns, one of the important figures of traditional pottery, have also changed. Traditional kilns, known as "kara fırın" specific to the region, have been replaced by gas and electric furnaces. Naturally, these developments have accelerated the production process. In this period, hand shaping and the use of wheels, which add value in traditional and artistic aspects, have also decreased, the potter's wheel turned mainly for exhibition use and reduced the wheel outlet pottery production. In addition, the production of ceramics with the plaster mold method, which provides product diversity, has been a factor that caused the traditional structure to be deformed.

The traditional form of Avanos pottery is original unglazed terracotta work. Decorations of some ceramics were made with the technique of scraping and relief. While these pots present an original image with the burnishing method, in recent years, ceramic surface studies with synthetic materials such as; decorations made with rapido pens, car paint, yacht varnish, etc., which will never be compatible with ceramics, due to economic concerns are another factor that makes Avanos pots lose value.



Picture 5. Avanos Gift Ceramics for Sale



Picture 6. Avanos Terracotta Works as Souvenir

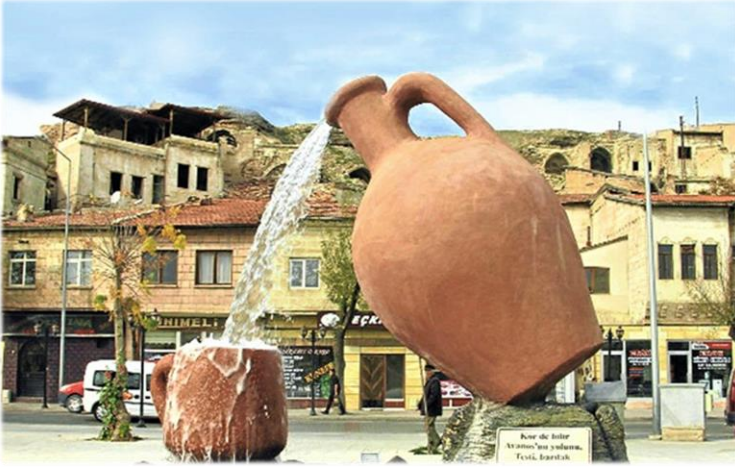
The diversity in the products has led to the application of hand and mold shaping methods and techniques, and the development of new decoration techniques, as well as the wheel (Aslan, 2012:3). Social scientists and some ceramic artists argue that the aim of monetary gain and the understanding of production based on demand negatively affect both traditional production and ceramic art tendency in cultural context.

In recent years, sales of terracotta souvenirs produced in different sizes rather than traditional and functional forms have dominated Avanos pottery. Domestic and foreign tourists especially prefer small portable objects. On the other hand, the production of a few circular Hittite vessel forms with a spouted mouth with the same method and similarity for gift purposes with a historical appearance satisfied the demand, and could not reach the desired value with repeated forms and wrong decorations. In this way, the ceramic object forms have grown to include the forms of different cultural objects and have relatively moved away from representing Avanos pottery culture.

The reason why Avanos potters concentrate mostly on production in this direction is undoubtedly economic concerns. This deformation, which was thought to have economic returns at the beginning, started to show its negative effects in the following years. The understanding based solely on financial returns has not been long-lasting, as the traditional framework has been moved away in recent years, the balance between art and tradition has not been fully established in the modern sense.

From Crafts to Art in the Modernization Process: Avanos

There are also developments in Avanos that will reconcile traditional handicrafts with the contemporary process. Avanos, which is a dense ceramic region, has not been left out of the interest of ceramic artists and academicians. In addition to the festivals organized on Avanos pottery, many academic symposiums and workshops have been organized with the cooperation of the state, university and the municipality. Firstly; In the 2000s, the "International Avanos Ceramic Symposium", which was conducted and continued with the Hacettepe University Faculty of Fine Arts and Avanos Municipality under the direction of Dr. Candan Dizdar Terwiel, has been a very good example in terms of academic, cultural and social



Picture 7. Avanos Jug in Public Space

aspects. The fact that talented young people from Avanos have chosen the Ceramics Departments of the Faculty of Fine Arts and the art and design education they have received from there have brought a new atmosphere to Avanos pottery in the recent period. In this period, the transfer of ceramics from narrow store shelves to better selected presentation centers and even to the public space in terms of modern art also makes a positive emphasis on the fact that the district is a ceramic settlement.

Cappadocia, where underground settlements are common, and therefore, Avanos not only has transformed these natural and historical areas into visual areas, but also has carried historical, traditional and modern ceramic art works to museums by making a breakthrough within the scope of museology. This formation has also created a different tourism theme in Avanos. The world's first and only underground museum was established with a modern understanding of museology within the boundaries of Avanos district with sponsored by individual entrepreneurship. The building, which includes exhibition halls, social activity areas and other service units, was carved into the rock and built on

an area of 1600 m², 20 m below the ground. Avanos, which has hosted many civilizations and is known to have continued the tradition of pottery since the Hittites, has brought a new perspective to its pottery with this museum in the context of ceramic art.



Picture 8. Modern Ceramics in Public Spaces in Avanos



Picture 9. Abstract Ceramic Work



Picture 10. Performance Work on Kızılırmak River

As stated on the museum's own institutional website; The history accumulated in the region for thousands of years and this traditional handicraft has passed from father to son in Avanos marks the general view of the district.



Picture 11. Güray Museum Entrance

However, the lack of a museum that would exhibit the historical development of this traditional handicraft was emphasized by visitors from all over the world. As a social and cultural responsibility, it was decided to establish a museum in order to fill this deficiency and leave a nice gift to future generations. In this direction, by adding modern and traditional works of world-famous Turkish ceramic artists to the existing works in our collection, it has become possible to introduce the development of ceramic art in the historical process (URL3).

Having been structured for these purposes, the museum, which has a rich collection with both terracotta ceramic works and small finds, consists of three sections: Antique Works Hall, Modern Artifacts Hall, Exhibition Hall and Cafeteria-Foyer. In the Antique Works Hall; in this hall, where a chronological exhibition is held, ceramics and pottery from the Late Chalcolithic Period, Bronze Ages and Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Seljuk and Ottoman Periods are exhibited.



Picture 12. Güray Museum General View



Picture 13. Ceramic Museum, From the Hall of Modern Artifacts



Picture 14. Ceramic Museum, From the Hall of Antiquities

This exhibition, created in the light of scientific research, offers a cross-section about the development stages of ceramics in Anatolia from Antique Age to the present day. In addition, it provides a collective perspective to the development of ceramics in Anatolia by including local ceramics from different geographical regions of Anatolia. In the Modern Artifacts Hall; World-renowned contemporary and traditional ceramic artists trained in Turkey and their works are introduced. This understanding undoubtedly adds value to the thousands of years of Anatolian pottery tradition in the focus of local pottery.



Picture 15. Modern Art Ceramics Based on Avanos Pottery



Picture 16. Burnished Avanos Pottery

Conclusion and Evaluation

Aesthetics, art and craft are a series of concepts that cannot be clearly separated from each other and whose discussions cannot be ended descriptively and conceptually. In the pre and post of modern art debates, ceramics has been in the middle of "craft or art?" discussions in every period. Despite its 9000-year history dating back to the Neolithic Period, terracotta production has been conceptually dismissed from the art description because of the handicraft and functionality it contains. Especially in

Anatolian geography, with its prominent historical past and tradition, terracotta art is, also, counted as the first works of art.

The period in which ceramics were most intensely defined in terms of art, craft and aesthetics is the XVIII century. Because until this century, art and craft in general terms were used interchangeably. By the end of the XVIII century, the "craftsman" and "artist" had become opposites; now the "artist" was the creator of fine art, while the "craftsman" was just someone who did useful or fun things. Perhaps the best answer to the debates on art and craft is found in the doctrine of the Bauhaus School. Gropius, who put forward the main idea of the school, emphasized his basic idea with a manifesto; *"Architects, sculptors, painters, we should all turn to crafts. ... There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted craftsman. In rare moments of inspiration, transcending the consciousness of his will, the grace of heaven may cause his work to blossom into art.. but the foundations of proficiency are indispensable to every artist. Therein lays the prime source of creative imagination. Let's create a new craftsman's guild without class distinctions that raise an arrogant obstacle between craftsmen and artists. Let's work together to build a new future.* [Nayulor 1968,50] (Shinner, 2004: 384).

The pottery atelier, one of the first ateliers established by Gropius, is the "Dornburg Ceramic Atelier" in Dornburg province, near Bürgel, a town with a rich pottery history, near Weimar. This atelier became the center of Bauhaus ceramics. The two talents came together at the Dornburg atelier and brought a universal orientation to ceramic art. These talent holders were potter master craftsman Gerhard Marcks and design expert artist Max Krehan.

Appointed as a form master in the ceramics department, Gerhard Marcks (1889–1981) appreciated Max Krehan's outstanding professional talent, openness to new things and human qualities. He always worked with him in a respectful manner. Although Marcks himself did not have any practical knowledge and skills in pottery, he had a keen interest in ceramics before coming to the Bauhaus (URL4). Although Marcks did not have much experience in ceramic applications before coming to the Bauhaus, he had a very good theoretical knowledge. He conducted research on Central American (Native American) pottery, Mediterranean, Near Eastern and Anatolian pottery and their forms and developed them with drawings. Gerhard Marcks produced mostly drawings and engravings in Dornburg, as well as wood and clay sculptures, which he could only apply to a limited extent. Expressing his main idea as "I aimed to recreate this old craft with all its beauty in Bauhaus", Marcks decorated the ceramic pots made by Krehan and then the pots of his students Marguerite Friedlaender, Theodor Bogler and Otto Lindig.

The Bauhaus doctrine, which is the best example of the combination of arts and crafts, has a lot to add to Avanos pottery. The coexistence of

academic studies and artists and local potters will undoubtedly add value to both crafts and arts traditionally. Walter Gropius' demand for "art and technology - a new unity" expressed in his manifesto actually has a nice connotation for Avanos pottery. Modern ceramic artists in Turkey have provided the establishment of a modern museum understanding of contemporary craft in Avanos by showing considerable interest in Avanos ateliers on ceramics museum today. Today there is a balanced, correct and positive progress between craft and art.

As a matter of fact, studies on this subject have recently intensified. Especially the academic activities carried out under the leadership of the universities in Nevşehir and Ankara, with the support of the relevant ministry and local governments, have been such as to leading up Avanos pottery and handicrafts. Ceramic artist academicians and their grad students from Avanos have brought a different atmosphere to Avanos today. The best examples of this are seen in the presentation of traditional and artistic ceramics, including gift ceramics as well as in the forms. This educational process has begun to succeed to make a work by teaching Avanos craftsmen the explications between archaeological, traditional and artistic ceramics. This is because the presentation of the works in every period in a large and authentic museum has inspired other souvenir-selling ceramists and pottery masters in the district, and relatively has also affected the showcase settlements and ceramic forms.

The level of awareness of ceramicists, who recently have thought that using synthetic paints and yacht varnish will make gift ceramics attractive, is not exactly known, but hopefully, this transformation will enable them to notice some things about the low sales they complain about the most

As it is known, pottery is an art and craft that is characterized by different forms, decoration and techniques and attracts attention all over the world. Pottery production, which is a very important cultural element as the heritage of past cultures, is an indispensable value within the scope of "Intangible Cultural Heritage". Known as the cradle of civilizations, Anatolia is one of the richest geographies of this heritage. It is noteworthy that in many pottery centers of Anatolia this struggle continues with primitive methods, albeit with resistance. However, the insufficiencies in the scope of protection have wiped out this historical visuality and craft in the last 10-15 years. Avanos is much more fortunate than other Anatolian pottery centers with its tourism advantage. Along with tourism and other advantages, it has attracted the attention of ceramic artists and academicians, and succeeded in sustainable cultural pottery, albeit with a fluctuating course.

Conventionality is undoubtedly not a repetition of what has been done in the past. However, traditional forms should be explored by ceramic academics and artists, without forgetting or forgotten, and it should be aimed to present them to the craftsmen and society who produce ceramics with contemporary interpretations.

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- Picture12. <http://www.guraymuze.com/yazi/1/antik-eserler-salonu> (Access: 09.12.2020)
- Picture13. <http://www.guraymuze.com/yazi/1/antik-eserler-salonu> (Access: 09.12.2020)
- Picture14. <http://www.guraymuze.com/yazi/1/antik-eserler-salonu> (Access: 09.12.2020)
- Picture15. Skylife, Mart 2007, s.78
- Picture16. Skylife, Mart 2007, s.75
- Drawing1. Drawn by Author
- Drawing2. Drawn by Author
- Drawing3. Drawn by Author

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